

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS



Department of Agricultural Resources

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January 17, 2016

Avian Influenza Alert: Avian Influenza Confirmed on 10 Commercial Turkey Farms in Indiana

On January 15, 2016, the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) confirmed highly pathogenic H7N8 avian influenza at a commercial turkey farm in Dubois County, Indiana. Surveillance testing in the control area surrounding the initial infected farm identified 9 additional farms that were found to be positive for avian influenza as well. Eight of the farms have been confirmed to have a low pathogenic subtype of H7N8, with testing on the ninth farm not yet complete. Additional flock testing in the affected area is ongoing. State and federal agencies are working alongside the poultry operations to minimize the impact and eliminate the disease. All flocks testing positive for an H7 subtype are scheduled for depopulation. This subtype of avian influenza is different from the virus responsible for the outbreak that subsided in June 2015, after having affected nearly 50 million birds in 21 different states.

Avian influenza does not present a food safety risk; poultry and eggs are safe to eat. Poultry and eggs should be handled appropriately and cooked to 165 degrees. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) considers the risk of illness to humans to be very low.

The pathogenicity of a virus refers to its ability to produce disease. Birds with low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI) often show no signs of infection or only have minor symptoms. HPAI viruses spread quickly and cause high mortality in domestic poultry. LPAI viruses of the H7 or H5 subtype have been known to readily mutate into HPAI viruses and are addressed as such by regulatory agencies. HPAI can infect all types of chickens, turkeys and many other kinds of birds. The virus can be spread by contact with infected birds or contaminated materials.

MDAR is reminding poultry owners of the few simple steps that can be taken to try to protect their flocks from avian influenza:

- Wild migratory birds are natural carriers for avian influenza. Preventing wild birds from mixing with domestic flocks is essential to disease control. Poultry owners should assure their birds are kept away from wild birds, particularly waterfowl.
- Avoid unnecessary movement of poultry between locations and be aware of the potential to carry avian influenza contaminated materials onto properties where birds are kept.
- New birds should be completely isolated for at least one month prior to being added into the flock. Birds that are returning home from fairs or shows should also be isolated from the home flock as if they were new arrivals.
- Limit the number of people that have access to your flock.
- Do not share equipment with other bird owners without thoroughly cleaning and disinfecting between locations.
- Create a written biosecurity plan by actually writing down the precautions you take. This will allow others to take the same precautions should someone else need to care for your birds.

Any unexplained, unusual or unexpected deaths or other signs of illness should be reported immediately. Problems noted in domestic poultry flocks should be reported to the Division of Animal Health (617-626-1795). Wild bird deaths or illness should be reported to the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (508-389-6300). Prompt reporting will expedite rapid testing and diagnosis.

An Avian Influenza FAQ was developed by the MA Departments of Agricultural Resources, Public Health, and Environmental Protection, in conjunction with federal and local partners:

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/id/epidemiology/cdc-animals-pet-safety.html>.